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Recommended Citation

Chen, Hsin; Papazafeiropoulou, Anastasia; Duan, Yanqing; and Chen, Ta-Kang, "The Antecedents And Outcomes Of Brand Experience On The Social Networking Site" (2013). *ECIS 2013 Completed Research*. 10.
http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2013_cr/10

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THE ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF BRAND EXPERIENCE ON THE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

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Abstract

As the population of Facebook users continues to grow, companies are paying increasing attention to the influence of social networks to promote brands. They are using this emerging platform to carry out marketing activities. However, fewer studies have actually discussed the benefit which brands could attain by operating on a social networking site. Therefore, this study aims to understand the motivation and results regarding Brand Experience of consumers when using social networking sites. We propose a model to examine the influence of intrinsic motivations. According to the results of our study, Brand Love, Entertainment value, Social Norm and Group Referent positively influence Brand Experience. In addition, we also used We Intention as mediation in the study. We believe that our results could be useful for companies to exploit social network sites as a marketing tool.

Keywords : Facebook, Virtual Brand Community, Social Norm, Group Referent, Brand Love, Entertainment Value, We Intention, Brand Experience.

1. Introduction

Social networking sites such as Facebook, provides a platform for people to use as a vital means of interacting, communicating and sharing, thereby enhancing human connections and sociability (Nie, 2001). According to Facebook, there were over 1 billion active users and 618 million daily active users on average in December 2012. The popularity of Facebook has also attracted companies' attention and inspired marketing activities via this new platform. The numbers of studies regarding Facebook and marketing have also significantly increased during the past years (Edwards, 2010; Gelles, 2010). Attending diverse social networking sites help consumers to discover more areas or objects of interest. Experience Marketing is not a new marketing concept. Schmitt (1999) first proposed this concept in 1999. He pointed out that a brand is more than correct price or correct value; it is also a correct experience by establishing contact with customers. Tsai (2005) argues that in order to improve customer experience, brands need to manage their media image through interaction between media and customer. Barwise and Meehan's (2010) point out that Facebook, as a popular social network website, could help brands to disseminate word of mouth, whether positive or negative, with amazing speed. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that affect users' intention to use social network pages. However, only few academic studies have attempted to address these topics. For example, only a few studies have pointed out that the community enhances brand equity by improving brand word of mouth (Adjei et al., 2010; McAlexander et al., 2002), and social media marketing has positive impact on brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012), and even fewer studies have focused on the Facebook platform. Much research on Facebook has focused on the concerns of identity and privacy (Dwyer & Passerini, 2007; Wellman, 1996). Other recent research has looked at the relationship between the profile structure and friendship articulation (Lampe et al., 2007). There is, however, a dearth of research on Facebook that considers brands (Smith et al 2012).

Based on above, this study aims to understand how companies enhance positive brand experiences to consumers via social networking sites such as Facebook Pages, and the factors affecting consumers' willingness to use companies' Facebook Pages. We present a model to examine the factors which provide customers with positive Brand Experience from customers' intrinsic motivation, and to demonstrate how companies can improve intention to use companies' Facebook page by providing positive Brand experience.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Building

Among the functions provided by Facebook, Facebook Pages is a tool created to offer a platform or channel to any public figure or organization to converse with Facebook users. Since November 2007, many bands, sports teams, artists, films, brands, non-profit organizations and businesses have been using Facebook Pages as free, customizable presence on Facebook to interact with Facebook users. Thus, a brand could build and maintain a timely, dynamic and long lasting relationship via Facebook Page with its fans and customers.

2.1 Virtual Brand Community

A community is a social organization of people who share knowledge, values and goals (Jonassen et al., 1998). With the rise of today's new media, the concept of traditional communities has been challenged by online communities. Communities no longer exist only in the physical world but also in the virtual world that operates through the Internet (Lee & Lee, 2010). A virtual community has been described as a group of people who interact online with others in a sustained and repetitive manner who are not bound by physical geography (Ridings & Gefen, 2004), as any group of people who communicate shared interests electronically (Dennis et al., 1998), and those engaged in an intentional social action derived from distinct common interests (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002), among other conceptualizations. A recent research by Laroche, et al (2012) suggested that social media based brand communities offer brand owners the ability to enhance

value, brand trust, brand loyalty and feelings of community among members. Facebook pages are an example of a social network-based online brand community (Pöyry et al 2013).

2.2 Social and Self Motivation

To understand the factors driving people to use new technical media, we also considered Uses and Gratifications Paradigm (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which was originally developed and employed by communication researchers to understand people's motivations for using different media (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; McQuail, 1987), Social psychological model of goal-directed behavior (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001) and Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) as underlying frameworks. In several studies, they have been used to understand the benefits that virtual communities can provide their current and potential members, and thus attract more people to participate (Dholakia *et al.*, 2003; Sangwan, 2005). Dholakia *et al.* (2003) developed a model based on the Uses and Gratifications Paradigm which included the five values that people would derive while they join communities: "purposive" value, "self-discovery" value, value of "maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity", "social enhancement" value and "entertainment" value, to explain users' individual motivations in using virtual communities. Purposive value is constructed from a marketing perspective. It is defined as "the value derived from accomplishing some pre-determined instrumental purpose" (including giving or receiving information). The second value, "self-discovery", involves understanding and deepening salient aspects of one's self through social interactions. One aspect of self discovery is to interact with others in order to access social resources and facilitate the attainment of one's future goals (McKenna & Bargh, 1999). Another aspect of self-discovery is that such interactions may help one to form, clearly define and elaborate one's own preferences, tastes and values. The third value is maintaining interpersonal connectivity and the fourth value is social enhancement. They have been considered to be contained within Group Referent which is defined as a kind of social benefit. The last value is entertainment value, derived from fun and relaxation through playing or otherwise interacting with others. To discuss Purposive value derived from joining Facebook Pages the virtual community of new social network sites should be treated as a new tech-media. We discovered that many studies have discussed related topics and the Purposive value has been proven to be a factor affecting user adoption of a new tech media, such as Facebook Pages. Therefore, we will focus on the other 4 values ("Self-discovery", "Maintain interpersonal connectivity", "Social enhancement" and "Entertainment"), which we consider to be the difference between Social Network Sites and traditional web service.

2.3 Group Referent

We classify factors attracting consumers to join Facebook Page to two categories: Social Motivation which includes Group Referent and Social Norm; Self-Motivation which includes Entertainment value and Brand Love. Since Facebook Page is not only a new technology media but also a virtual brand community, intention behavior to keeping use the Facebook Page could be seen as continuing to interact and participate with the virtual brand community. Group-referent is considered as a kind of social benefit from maintaining interpersonal connectivity and social enhancement (Dholakia et al., 2003). Maintaining interpersonal connectivity refers to the social benefits derived from building and maintaining connections with other people such as social support, friendship, and intimacy. Several studies have pointed out that many participants join communities mainly to dispel their loneliness, meet like-minded others, and receive companionship and social support (McKenna & Bargh, 1999; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Social enhancement is the value that a participant derives from gaining acceptance and approval of other members when they joined groups, and the enhancement of one's social status within the community on account of one's contributions to it (Baumeister, 1998). Studies have also shown that many participants join virtual communities mainly to answer others' questions and to provide information, for recognition by peers (Hars & Ou, 2002). Group intentions are oriented toward shared activities, which require: (1) mutual responsiveness among participants to the intentions

and actions of others, (2) collective commitment to the joint activity, and (3) commitment to support others involved in the activity (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Tuomela (1995) defined We Intention as a “commitment of an individual to engage in joint action and involves an implicit or explicit agreement between the participants to engage in that joint action”. Dholakia et al. (2003) have noted that with We intention, such joint action may not require contemporaneous; members can perform their respective roles at different times. Refer to the above literatures, we defined the Group Referent in our model as to the level of interpersonal connectivity by keeping in touch with other members of the Facebook Page and perception on the raising of self-value among the Facebook Page members. We defined the We intention as the willingness of keeping use the Facebook Page to interact with other members. As Facebook Pages are a kind of virtual brand community, and can show the number of the user’s offline and online friends who have joined the Facebook Pages, we thus propose the following hypothesis: **H1.1:** Group referent has a positive effect on users’ behavioral We Intention to use Facebook Pages.

2.4 Social Norm

Social Norm is defined as standards of behavior that are based on widely shared beliefs on how individual group members ought to behave in a given situation (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004), as well as commonly considered legitimate and socially shared guidelines to accepted and expected behavior (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976). Venkatesh et al. (2003) also define social norm as “the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system”. Thus, we can see that social norm does not have to be official policy, but rather legitimate. It is a shared guideline, either implicit or explicit, leading people’s behavior to be socially expected and accepted. Social norm is a very important determinant of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Dickinger et al. (2008) have reported that users are often influenced by social norms, peers and their surroundings. Moreover, Hung et al. (2003) and Kleijnen et al. (2004) pointed out that the social norm had an influence on the intention to use mobile service. Thus, as some consumers joined Facebook Pages because they were interested in other people with common social expectations, we defined the Social Norm as the effectiveness of Social Perception towards users’ participation in the Facebook Page and propose the following hypothesis: **H1.2:** Social Norm has a positive effect on users’ behavioral We Intention to use Facebook Pages.

2.5 Entertainment Value

Entertainment value is considered as a value from fun and relaxation by playing or interacting with others (Dholakia et al., 2003). According to McKenna and Bargh’s (1999) study, many members join the virtual communities for entertainment by exploring different fictional identities, as well as encountering and solving virtual challenges. We also observed that most Facebook Pages provide online games to attract people to participate in events and even join their Facebook Pages as fans. Some of these online games allow users to invite their Facebook friends join the games that they are playing. Thus we defined that Entertainment value as: the entertainment motivation of a user using the Facebook Page. Hence, we proposed the following hypothesis: **H1.3:** Entertainment Value has a positive effect on users’ behavioral We intention to use Facebook Pages.

2.6 Brand Love

Caroll and Ahuvia (2006) defined love for a brand as “the degree of passionate emotional attachment that a person has for a particular trade name.” and conceptualized it as a type of satisfaction. From Albert et al. (2007), consumers’ brand love includes the following characteristics: (1) passion for a brand, (2) brand attachment, (3) positive evaluation of the brand, (4) positive emotions in response to the brand, and (5) declarations of love toward the brand. We adopt the definition of Brand Love according to the literature and believe that consumers would want to join Facebook Pages when they love the brands and use this platform to demonstrate their

brand love to others. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis: **H1.4:** Brand Love has a positive effect on users' behavioral We intention to use Facebook Pages.

2.7 Brand Experience

Consumer and marketing researchers have shown that experience occurs when consumers search for and consume products or services (Brakus et al., 2008; Holbrook, 2000). However, experience can also occur indirectly, such as: when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communications from both physical or virtual channels and platforms (Brakus et al., 2009). Therefore consumers' experiences with a brand do not occur only through the consumption of a product or service. Brand experience comprises all of the brand-related stimuli, such as: brand-identifying colors (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992), Shapes (Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998), typefaces, background design elements (Mandel & Johnson 2002), slogans, mascots and brand characters (Keller, 1987). We adopted the viewpoint of Brakus et al. (2009) and propose brand experience as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensation, feelings and cognitions) and behavioral responses, and evoked by brand-related stimuli which are part of brands design and identity. A long-lasting brand experience stored in consumers' memory would affect consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver, 1997). We defined the Brand Experience as the response from user sensory, affective, behavior, and intellectual of the brand's Facebook Page (brand sponsored). According to the characteristics of Brand Experience, Facebook Pages, as a kind of virtual brand community, could enhance consumers' brand experiences when consumers interact with brands via Facebook Pages personally or as a community. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1.5: Group Referent has a positive effect on Facebook Pages' Brand Experience.

H1.6: Social Norm has a positive effect on Facebook Pages' Brand Experience.

H1.7: We Intention to use Facebook Pages has a positive effect on Facebook Pages' Brand Experience.

Also, emotional stimulation as Brand Love and Entertainment Value would also affect Brand Experience. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1.8: Entertainment Value has a positive effect on Brand Experience.

H1.9: Brand Love has a positive effect on Brand Experience.

Based on aforementioned hypothesis, we proposed a model to support our study as shown in figure 1.

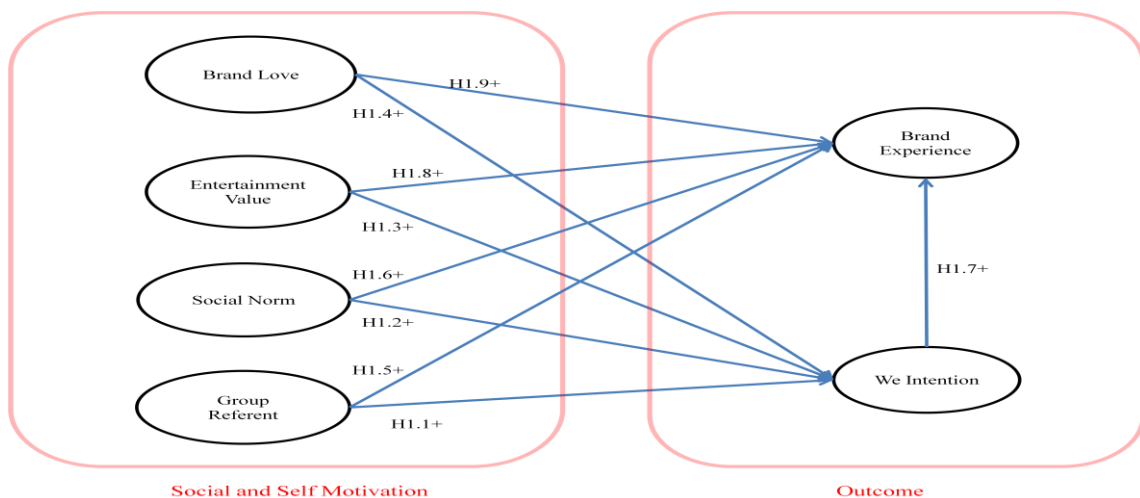


Figure 1. Virtual Brand Community – Brand Experience Model

3. Research Methodology

This study focuses on the effectiveness of Facebook Pages for enhancing brand experience, the virtual brand community and Word-of-Mouth of brand. Therefore, we proposed a model to discuss the factors attracting people to join the Facebook Pages, a virtual brand community, to have interactions with these brands, and the benefits and values that brands could derive from the virtual brand community. We adopted a user survey method using an online questionnaire based on past studies and related academic research. The subjects used are Facebook users who have joined Facebook Pages. They included males and females, domestic and foreign users. The subjects were chosen by convenient sampling method. To validate the proposed research model, we chose the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to analyze the data collected. In our study, the measured items were developed based on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “not at all descriptive,” and 7 = “Extremely descriptive”). The questionnaire was distributed by E-mail, Facebook and Facebook Pages. We offered a lucky draw program as incentive to encourage people to fill out the questionnaire. In the pretest stage, we adopted Cronbach’s α as reference to estimate the reliability of measures for each variable. The testing results are shown in table 1. According to Table 1, we can see that the Cronbach’s α for all of the variables are over 0.7, meaning the measures are consistent. In order to reduce the questionnaire quantity to improve the survey’s performance and quality, we referred to the “scale if the item deleted” while we processed the Cronbach’s α testing to cancel the measures with lower reliability, and modified the wording of some measures according to the feedback from participants to produce the final questionnaire edition for this study.

We collected data from Facebook users in Taiwan by conducting an internet-based survey in the spring of 2011. The survey was introduced to participants as an “opinion survey regarding brand image and Word of Mouth on Facebook Pages.” Participants were asked to indicate the Facebook Pages that they mostly visited when they connect to Facebook, giving them the opportunity to complete the survey regarding the Facebook Pages that they were most familiar with. After we dropped the invalid responses, a total of 594 participants completed this survey (Response rate 59%). Of all valid responses, 43.8% were male, 56.2% were female. Respondents ranged in age from less than 15 years old to over 40 years old while most of participants (71.9%) were in the range of 21 years old to 35 years old. On average, respondents had been using Facebook for 1~2 years, suggesting a reasonable level of experience.

Variable Name	Measure Items	Cronbach’s α
Entertainment Value	4	.872
Social Norm	3	.835
Group Referent	5	.920
Brand Love	8	.937
We intention	8	.901
Brand Experience	12	.934

Table 1. Cronbach’s α for Each Variable

4. SEM Results, Discussion and Implications

This study uses SEM to evaluate the measurement model fit and test hypothesis.

4.1 Overall Model Fit

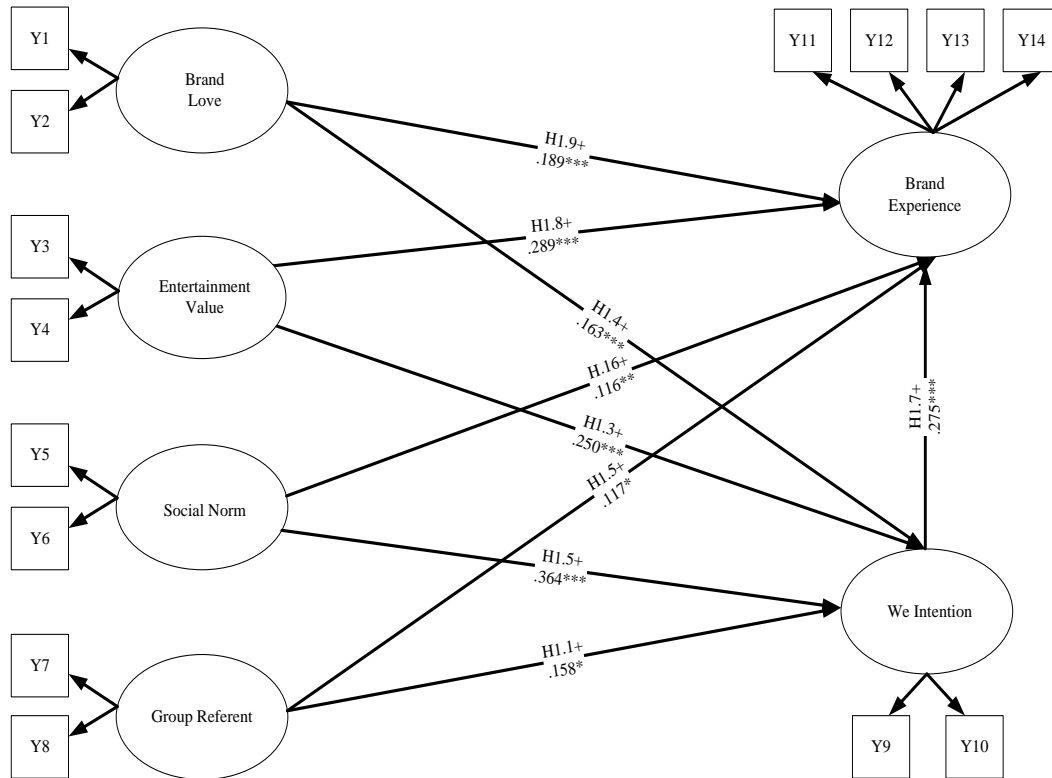
We estimated SEM using the AMOS to assess path coefficients and test relationships we proposed in the conceptual Model 1. The structural Model 1 under a good fit to the data: NFI = .976, NNFI = .976, CFI = .983, IFI = .984, RFI = .965, SRMR = .0235, RMSEA = .057, GFI = .961, AGFI = .934, $X^2 = 192.394$ (df = 62) and $X^2/df = 3.103$, shown in Table 2.

Name	Model
NFI	.976
NNFI	.976
CFI	.983
IFI	.984
RFI	.965
SRMR	.0235
RMSEA	.057
GFI	.961
AGFI	.934
X^2	192.394
df	62
X^2/df	3.103

Table 2. The evaluation of model fitting

4.2 Path Results

To test specific construct relationships, we optimized the fit of the data to the model and examined standardized parameter estimates for all significant constructs. The results are shown in Figure 2.



NFI = .976, NNFI = .976, CFI = .983, IFI = .984, RFI = .965, SRMR = .0235, RMSEA = .057, GFI = .961, AGFI = .934, $\chi^2 = 192.394$ (df = 62) and $\chi^2/df = 3.103$; * means P value < 0.05; ** means P value < 0.01; *** means P value < 0.001

Figure 2. Parameter Estimates for Model

Considering social motivations and their influence on We Intention, Social Norm influences We Intention as S.E. = .364; t value = 7.654 and Group Referent influences We Intention as S.E. = .158; t value = 2.871, we can see Social Norm to We intention path (H1.1) is supported and Group Referent to We Intention path (H1.2) is supported. According to the results above, consumers would have better intention to join the discussion topic, on line, off-line events and activities host by the Facebook Pages if they received positive responses from friends, relatives and other members in the virtual brand communities. Thus, H1.1 and H1.2 are supported. Considering Intrinsic motivation, Entertainment Value influences on the We Intention as S.E. = .250, t value = 4.609 and Brand Love influence We Intention as S.E. = .163, t value = 3.784, showing that they would have had better intention to join the discussion topic, on line, off-line events and activities host by the Facebook Pages if they loved the brand better and perceived that the Facebook Pages entertained them. Thus, H1.3 and H1.4 are supported. Considering the variables influencing Brand Experiences, we found that Group Referent (S.E. = .113, t value = 2.754), Entertain Value (S.E. = .303, t value = 6.664), Brand Love (S.E. = .183, t value = 4.920), We Intention (S.E. = .271, t value = 5.253) and Social Norm (S.E. = .120, t value = 2.829) do influence Brand Experience either by external (interpersonal) or internal (by consumers themselves) motivation. However, in comparing the P value of Social Norm (P value = .008) and Group Referent (P value = .011) to the other paths to Brand Experience, we can see that their influences on Brand Experience are not as strong as others. We think that Social Norm and Group Referent would influence Brand Experience via We Intention as consumers interact with friends, relatives, cyber friends and other members of the Facebook Pages by participating in the events hosted by the Facebook Pages or after using the Facebook Pages, while most of Social Norms are received by the friends and relatives in the real world, and most Group Referents are obtained by the fans and members of the Facebook Page in the cyber world. Thus, H1.5, H1.6, H1.7, H1.8 and H1.9 are supported. Table 3 shows the SEM results which supported our hypothesis.

	S.E.	t value	P	Label
WI <--- SN	.364	7.654	***	Supported
WI <--- BL	.163	3.784	***	Supported
WI <--- EV	.250	4.609	***	Supported
WI <--- GR	.158	2.871	**	Supported
BE <--- EV	.289	6.070	***	Supported
BE <--- GR	.117	2.530	*	Supported
BE <--- WI	.275	5.365	***	Supported
BE <--- SN	.116	2.660	**	Supported
BE <--- BL	.189	5.079	***	Supported

Notes: EV = Entertain Value, SN = Social Norm, GR = Group Referent, BL = Brand Love, WI = We Intention, BE = Brand Experience; * *P-value* < 0.05, ** *P-value* < 0.01, *** *P-value* < 0.001

Table 3. The SEM results

5. Conclusion

Our empirical survey-based study found overall support for our proposed social motivation and intrinsic motivation influence model of virtual community participation. The findings suggest that appropriate conceptualization of intentional social action in virtual communities and the community's influence on members stem from an understanding or expectation of various benefits that participants seek to attain from social interactions. These findings raised several interesting issues. As we mentioned before, experience is currently an important topic in the marketing field in order to provide customers with positive experience, such as by Facebook Page. To understand the motivations to join Facebook Pages and thus to have a positive Brand Experience, we proposed four motivations with 2 categories which influence the Brand Experience of customers joining the virtual brand community of Facebook Pages. According to our results, customers perceive positive brand experience when they love the brand. This suggests that companies improve their brand image to get their customers to love it more, and consequently to improve the positive brand experience when they interact with the brand on Facebook Page platform. From an entertainment viewpoint, we suggest that as Facebook is a social network web site on the internet, and Facebook Pages is the platform to allow brand interaction with customers, customers would perceive a positive experience when Facebook Page is entertaining, as with other web sites. In considering the social factors, we can see that if customers participate in a Facebook Page in which most of their friends or relatives participate, they will perceive a better positive brand experience. In addition, if the lines they posted on the Facebook Pages appear to be popular and are identified by other fans of the Facebook Page, this would consequently generate a positive brand experience as well. The results also show that four abovementioned motivations have paths to Brand Experience mediated by the variable "We intention". This result suggests that the companies which host or initiate events by the Facebook Pages should not only focus on the interaction between the customers and brand, but also the interaction between the members of the Facebook Pages. As more and more people participate, the event hosted by the brand on Facebook could enable more customers to interact with others, thus to create a situation for a more positive brand experience. In terms of limitations, our study was unable to survey and collect data worldwide due to time and budget constraints. Hence, we suggest that following studies can test our model in different regions or countries and explore if

cultural differences affect the results. Additionally, the data we collected is not specific to a brand so a brand specific study could be a good extension of our work. Finally, a study taking the vendors' rather than the users' perspective may also be useful in the future. As for future research, we suggest extending the application of the proposed model on other commonly used social networking sites and conducting qualitative methods would add much of a value to the results of this research.

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7. Appendix - Scales and Items used in the survey

Entertainment Value (Dholakiaa <i>et al.</i> , 2003)	
EV1	Being a member of the Facebook Pages brings me pleasure.
EV2	It is interesting to be part of these Facebook Pages.
EV3	It is relaxing to be a member of this Facebook Page.
Social Norm (Dickinger <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Thompson <i>et al.</i> , 1991; Venkatesh <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Taylor & Todd, 1995)	
SN1	I will join the Facebook Pages because my friends are part of it.
SN2	I will join the Facebook Pages because my families are part of it.
Group Referent (Dholakiaa <i>et al.</i> , 2003)	
Maintaining interpersonal connectivity	
GR1	Joining the Facebook Pages gives me an opportunity to interact with other fans.
GR2	Joining the Facebook Pages gives me an opportunity to get in touch with other fans.
Social enhancement value for Group Referent	
GR3	My feedbacks are likely to attract other fans to click on "Like".
GR4	My feedbacks will stimulate other fans to respond.
Brand Love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)	
BL1	The brand (of the Facebook Page) is a wonderful brand.
BL2	The brand makes me feel pleasure.
BL3	The brand is totally awesome.
BL4	The brand brings a cheerful sensation.
BL5	I love this brand.
We Intention	
WI1	If my friends are also members of the same Facebook Page, my interest to participate in the discussion will be higher.
WI2	My friends' participation in the events will also raise my interest to join the event.
Brand Experience (Brakus <i>et al.</i> , 2009)	
Sensory	
BE1	I have a positive image of this brand's Facebook Page.
BE2	I find this Facebook Page to be very interesting.
BE3	This Facebook Page is appealing to me.
Affective	
BE4	This Facebook Page triggers my emotions.
BE5	I am emotionally attached to this Facebook Page.
BE6	This Facebook Page is a sentimental brand.
Behavioral	
BE7	I have good experiences being a fan of this Facebook Page.
BE8	This Facebook Page needs to have hands-on experience.
BE9	This Facebook Page stimulates my behavior.
Intellectual	
BE10	When I engage in the Facebook Page, it helps me to generate some ideas.
BE11	This Facebook Page makes me think.
BE12	The brand's Facebook Page stimulates my curiosity.